

Series: Seven Letters

Dear Pergamum; the Church Who Compromised

Revelation 2:12-17

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Good morning. Today, our passage comes from Revelation 2:12-17, which says this, “To the angel of the church in Pergamum, write, ‘These are the words of Him who has the sharp, double-edged sword: “I know where you live, where Satan has his throne, yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city, where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you. There are some among you who hold the teachings of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin, so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore, otherwise I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”’” The word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thank you, Zach. Zach is our young adults resident, and he has just been doing an awesome job. So thankful God brought him to Waterstone, and he has been working with the worship team and stuff, but good morning. How are you guys? Good. You guys ready for Fall Festival? By show of hands, how many of you are planning on throwing a pie in my face later today? Just so I know, okay, the kids in the front row here, Zach, our resident, another kid. All right. I am just going to preach for as long as I can today to limit the amount of time that is available to throw a pie in my face. That sound good? So, we will just roll into the second service. We will roll into the afternoon, and eventually you guys will get tired and go home, and no one will throw a pie at me. That is my plan. So no, excited for Fall Festival. It is going to be a great day, but before we get there, we are going to dive into this passage, this challenging text today from Revelation chapter two.

Before we get there, I want to tell you a story about a basketball game in west Texas. Some of you might have heard this story. Sometimes when you have been preaching for a while, you forget if you have shared stories before, so you can let me know after the service if I have already shared this one, but I was in high school. We were playing basketball. I am from Dallas. We drove way out to west Texas, the middle of nowhere, a small town, and it was like the flip of Hoosiers, the movie. You remember, like small town, everybody packs out to watch the game. We were the big city kids coming, and we were the bad guys in this scenario, big city kids coming to a small town, and right from tip-off, you could tell that it was going to be home cooking from the referees. They were just not calling anything. Any time we went up for a shot, the guys were pulling on our arms, and there were hard fouls, and just nothing was getting called, and everybody was getting pretty intense to the point where I went in, I crashed the boards for a rebound, and I caught an elbow straight to my nose, and it broke my nose. It was bleeding everywhere, and I just remember holding like a pool of blood in my hands, looking at the referee like, “Nothing? No foul? Nothing?” and yeah, he said no, and it was at that point that one of the ladies, one of the moms who had

driven us out to West Texas because we had a bunch of parents who were driving us out there, she just stood up and started yelling at the referee and saying, “You’re blind. You don’t have any clue what you’re doing. You’re not being fair,” and just really laid into him for about five minutes, and then at the end of the five minutes, there was a foul not called for the other team, but against us, and they were at the free throw line, and it was just dead silent except for this one woman just yelling at the referees, and the ref stopped the game, turned to her and said, “If you hate what is happening here so much, you can go ahead and leave,” and she responded by saying, “I would rather leave than watch this stuff,” except she used a word we do not say in church, and that was the moment my mom got kicked out of my high school basketball game.

I remember standing there, still like bleeding and stuff in my nose, and I was just like, “Oh my goodness, like this is not going well.” This is a bad moment for me, but here is the thing, I can’t really judge my mom for that moment, because a couple of years ago on a Fall Festival Sunday, this is true, I was outside running around with my family, enjoying all the things at Fall Festival, and a guy from my basketball team that I play with on Thursday nights, we just met because we happened to sign up for the same team, and he sees me out there, and he’s like, “Oh, what are you doing here at church?” and there was like an emphasis on church that I didn’t like. I wasn’t sure why he thought it was weird that I was at church, and he said, “What are you doing here?” and I said, “Oh, well, I actually work at the church,” and he said, “You? Like what, as a janitor?” and he couldn’t believe I was a pastor because at that time, I had a reputation on this team for getting, let’s just say, more technical fouls than are socially acceptable in my basketball club, so I would just get angry at the refs and slam the ball, and I have a little bit of a competitive problem, and so I come by it honestly. My mom got kicked out of a game. I am a pastor who gets technical fouls, and here is the thing and why this story matters.

You can sometimes tell in your life why something is important to you, how important something is to you by how you react when it doesn’t go the way you want. If something is important to you, and all of a sudden, it is not going the way you want, the level to which you react often shows how important it is. Now if you were to ask my mom, “Hey, is the success or safety of your child the most important thing in life to you?” She probably wouldn’t say yes. If you said, “Is the success and safety of your child more important to you than Jesus?” She definitely would not respond to that and say yes. She would say, “No, Jesus is more important,” but if you looked at her in that moment when she got kicked out of my high school basketball game, it looks like that is a pretty important thing, the success and safety of her child. When I get competitive on a Thursday night in a recreational league in downtown Littleton, where no one is going professional, no one is making a call, I mean, we were like barely holding onto our knees, still playing basketball, but my reaction shows how important that moment is to me, when it does not go the way that I want. There are all sorts of places in our lives like that one. There are just all sorts of places where when something does not quite go the way that we had hoped or the way that we had wished for, when something that we had been trying and striving to achieve it falls flat, our reaction tells us a lot about we how we care about those things.

Revelation actually has a word for that. The word that Revelation would use for that is actually one we might not expect. It is the word, “worship,” and when we think of worship, we think of what we just did, right? Like sing some songs to God, and that’s worship, but actually in the New Testament,

worship carries with it this different idea. Worship is actually something that you bow down to, something that you give yourself to, something that you, another way to put it might be place at the center of your life, something that feels really important to you and that you build your life around, and that is what Revelation says that you worship. Worship is bowing your life to something or someone. It is whatever you give your life to and trust your life with, whatever you think will make you safe, will make you happy, will make you feel like somebody.

For some of us, that looks like our kids' success or our kids' safety, and that is just the center of how we have built everything in our lives. For others of us, it is our own success, and our entire life is built around the idea that we just need to leverage who we are and the talents we have to get as much success as possible. For others, we build our lives around things like security or money. For some of us, it is politics. You have just gone all in on a political tribe, and we hope that and think that if our side wins, then things will finally be okay. For some of us, we center our lives around things like our body and how good we feel or how good we look. For some of us, it comes down to just being liked, and the center of our life is just trying to get the approval from as many people around us as we possibly can.

Now I want you to hear me today. One of the challenging pieces of Revelation is that we have been in this series where Jesus has written these letters to these churches, these Christian churches who are trying to follow after Jesus in the middle of Babylon and Rome, in the middle of an oppressive empire, and He is like writing this letter essentially to the rebels of Star Wars, the people who are fighting against the empire, and He is giving them a manual on what that fight is supposed to look like, how to keep their allegiance to Jesus, how to keep Jesus at the center of their lives in a world that is desperately trying to put something else in the center, but here is the thing that Revelation says. It is that the struggle is very rarely overt. That opposition very rarely just comes at you straight away. Most of the time it is much more subversive, and most of the time it looks like Jesus is still on the throne in your life, but you have just asked Him to scoot over a little bit so you can fit something else there.

When I read stories to my kids at night, we have this little rocking chair in their room that we sit in, and what is funny is when they come to sit with me, they never try to kick me out of the chair so they can have the chair. They want to sit next to me, and so they snuggle into this chair that really is not big enough for the three of us, but they want to make a little extra room for themselves, and we do that with different things in our life. Jesus is on the throne of our life. That is one of the things that Revelation contends. It is that if you want a flourishing life, if you want a life that looks like you were intended to have, Jesus should be at the center of your life. So many of us have that. We are followers of Jesus. He is on the throne in our life, and yet we have pushed Him to the side a little bit. "Hey Jesus, make a little room. Make a little room so I can have this," and what Revelation says and what this letter to Pergamum says is that when we do that, when we shift Jesus to the side, it is actually doing something more to us than just making a little room for something else that is important. It is actually deforming us in a way that causes some really severe challenges to us, so we are going to walk through this section verse by verse today, and we are going to see what Jesus has to say to this church to see what it might say to us. So, Revelation chapter 2, starting in verse 12, and it says this: "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write, 'These are the words of Him who has the sharp double-edged sword coming out of his mouth.'"

Now that is an allusion to Revelation 1, which we are going to go back to, but what we need to do first is we need to capture the place that we are in, Pergamum.

Pergamum is the city that we are in today, and Pergamum honestly sounds like a commercial that would come up in the middle of a Broncos game, like “Ask your doctor if Pergamum is right for you,” right? That is what it sounds like to me, but it is actually a city, and it was a very particular city. This city sat at the foot of a hill, of a mountain, and on the top of this mountain, overlooking the city, and then you can picture it, Littleton. We sit at the foot of the foothills, and we are backed up to the mountains, but it would be like if the skyline of the mountains beyond Denver and Littleton were just littered with temples all over the mountains. Then there was this altar that as soon as you saw Pergamum on the horizon, and you saw the mountains behind it, you would see this massive temple to the god Zeus in that day, and this temple, you can actually still see it. They shipped it brick by brick from Pergamum to Berlin in the 1800s, and it is actually going to be on display next year. You can go back, and you can look at this temple of Zeus. There are pictures of it all over the line, but it basically was this horseshoe of a temple that really looks like a throne room. It looks like a throne that someone could sit on, except it is massive in scale, and it is the size of a building, and that was the temple to Zeus, where at the foot of this throne, they would offer sacrifices to the peak god of the Roman culture, Zeus.

At the same time in this town of Pergamum, up on the hill, there was another temple, to Caesar Augustus, and in fact, Pergamum was one of the first cities to build a temple to Caesar Augustus, about thirty years before Jesus was born, and at this temple, they would again offer sacrifices to Caesar. They would say things like “Caesar is Lord,” “Caesar is Savior.” They would give him their worship and allegiance, and they would bow down to him, and then there was a third temple. There were a lot of temples, but I want to focus on these three. There was another one to Asclepius, the god of healing, that would take place, and this one I am really just telling you because I think it is interesting, and it freaks me out just a little bit, but it was this temple that was for Asclepius, the god of healing. What they believed is that there were these snakes, the symbol for the healing in this temple was a snake wrapped around a staff, which we see on a lot of our ambulances, and you would go into this temple, and you would pray to this God, and you would say, “You are my savior. I need healing,” from whatever you were dealing with, and then, this is the weird part. Okay kids, are you ready for this? This is the part that freaks me out. It is that they would have people lie on the floor of this temple, and the floor of the temple was just covered in snakes, like Indiana Jones style. Like it was just snakes everywhere, and the snakes, they were mostly non-venomous. They had no venom, and they were harmless, and they would just slither all over the floor, and they believed that if the snakes crawled over you enough, then you would be healed.

I would feel healed so fast. I would be out of there so quickly. Like, “Okay, if I have to lie down, you know what? I’m good.” Can you imagine if you go to your doctor’s office, and the waiting room is just covered in snakes? I would never be sick again. I would never need shots again. I would be totally fine. If you don’t know, I really hate snakes, and my daughter down here is laughing at me, because she knows that I don’t like snakes very much. So, this is Pergamum, and there are thrones everywhere, there are temples everywhere, and in the book of Revelation, wherever there is a throne, wherever there is a temple, there is somebody bowing down, and that is what Jesus is trying to tell us about Pergamum. It is that they are living in a place where the wrong thrones are being worshipped.

This is what it says in verse 13: “I know where you live,” and Jesus says, “I know the place that you live, where Satan has his throne,” and we think that in this reference, Jesus is referring to all of those different temples and throne rooms, “and yet you remain true to my name.” You have remained faithful to me in the midst of all of that challenge of the different worship that is going on there. “In fact, you did not renounce your faith in me.” You have given me your allegiance. You have kept me at the center in some ways, “not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city, where Satan lives.” So the other thing we are told is that this worship, contention, this battle over who you bowed to had gotten so intense that Antipas, one of the members of their church, had actually been executed for the worship that he, essentially someone said, “Caesar is Lord,” and Antipas said, “No, Jesus is Lord,” and it cost him his life, and so Jesus is saying, “You have passed the big test, but there is something more going on that I need to call your attention to.”

Verse 14, “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you. There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin, so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” This church is a church that would not bow to Caesar and would not bow to Zeus. They were being executed for their faith in Jesus, and yet Jesus comes to them, and He says, “But there is one thing that you are missing. There are a few things that you are getting wrong,” and He makes this weird, obscure reference to Balaam, which is a story from the Old Testament where Balaam was a prophet who was essentially paid to curse the people of Israel, and it is a really weird, fascinating story.

Balaam is riding on a donkey, and as he is riding on a donkey, they see an angel with a sword that is about to strike this prophet down so he can’t curse Israel, but the donkey sees the angel, and she starts talking to Balaam and saying, “Why do you keep beating me when I am trying to save you?” It is a really fascinating story, but here is what happens. As Balaam essentially cannot find a way to curse the Israelites, every time he tries to curse the Israelites, a blessing comes out, and so he decides to go a different way. Instead of fighting them overtly, he invites the Israelites into the temple, and he says, “Why don’t you just eat a meal with us? Just have dinner,” and then as they are entering into the dinner, they begin eating food that has been sacrificed to other idols, and they begin bowing down to those idols. This is subversive. He can’t fight them, and so he invites them into a space where they will make a compromise.

That is what is happening in Pergamum, and that is what the people who adhere to the Balaam teaching or to the teaching of the Nicolaitans are doing. It is essentially they are not overtly saying, “We are not following Jesus,” or “You need to stop following Jesus.” They are saying, “Hey why don’t you follow Jesus and make a little room for him?” Like follow Jesus and make a little room for someone else to be on the throne as well. “It is okay if you worship Jesus, and you go to the temple of Caesar. That is no big deal. It is okay if you worship Jesus and you worship Zeus. It is okay if you bow down to some other things in your life, as long as Jesus is on the throne too.” That is what is happening in Pergamum, but Jesus says that that is not the way that He wants His followers to live, that living that way is actually going to cost them in the long run, and so you have these people, the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans, and they are saying, “Relax, the idols aren’t real. It is just a meal. You can love Jesus and still eat at the temple. You can love Jesus and still just follow culture. You can love Jesus and just go along with the sexual immorality of the day. You can follow Jesus and attend the party or skip on those moral issues. Like you

can just put a little bit extra in. Just make a little room. Yeah, Jesus is there, sure, but bow here too, and that will make you have an easier time.”

What is so fascinating is it seems like a pretty low-stakes thing that is happening here, right? Just go to a dinner party. It says that Jesus shows up to this space, to this church, where they are being invited to those dinner parties, with a sword. Why would Jesus show up to a dinner party with a sword in his mouth? Revelation 2:12, we go back to it: “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write, ‘These are the words of Him who has the sharp double-edged sword in his mouth.’” Revelation 1:16 is where this idea comes from. We looked at it a couple of weeks ago. In his right hand, Jesus held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp double-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in all of its brilliance. I want you to think about that for a moment. In every single one of these letters, there is a reference back to Revelation one and how we see Jesus in his resurrected form and what He is doing on the throne. Why would this be the image that Jesus uses to call back to the people of Pergamum? How would Jesus show up to a dinner party with a sword? Swords are for fighting. They are for protecting people. They are for engaging in battle. Do you feel like Jesus is overreacting a little bit to an invitation to a dinner party?

This is what is going on beneath the surface. This is all about worship, and when you worship the wrong things in your life, when you place the wrong things at the center of your life, you are actually causing more harm to yourself than you sometimes realize, and there are a couple of reasons for that idea. The first thing is when you worship something other than Jesus, and you might be here today and you’re like, “I do not really even worship Jesus. I am not sure what I think about Him.” Just listen to the statements I am going to make and see if they ring true to you.

The first thing that happens is we place our hope or we center our lives on things that we think will fulfill us but cannot actually keep their promises. Every throne, everything you worship, everything you place at the center of your life offers you a promise. Zeus promised power. Caesar promised peace. The healing god Asclepius promised that he would heal and restore, but today, Zeus’s altar is a museum exhibit. Caesar’s empire has been gone for one thousand five hundred years, and every person who ever prayed to that healing god Asclepius eventually died, so they offered something, and then they did not deliver on the promise. God puts it this way in Jeremiah. He says, “My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me. They have turned away from God, who is the spring of living water, the spring of life-giving water, and they have chosen to dig their own cisterns, and their cisterns are broken, and they cannot hold water.” Essentially the image that God is painting is you are trying to fulfill your life. You are trying to bring satisfaction to your life by trying to fill a bucket that has a bunch of holes in the bottom of it.

You can imagine trying to pour water into a bucket. You have the hose running, you are trying to get the bucket to a tree, but it is just leaking water everywhere, and you think, “Okay, well, maybe if I just fill it with a little more water, or maybe if I just take a little more time, or maybe if I just run the bucket faster over to the tree,” and the problem is **not** your effort. The problem is **not** how much you are putting into it. The problem is the bucket cannot actually do what you need it to do. For many of us, we have put things at the center of our lives, hoping that it will fulfill us, hoping that it will give us what we are longing for, but the problem is the bucket itself. We are asking things to do what only God can do, and so we run around exhausting ourselves. “I will just get a little bit more success, a little bit more security, a little more

attention from others,” and sometimes it works for a minute, and then you look down, and it is leaking again, and meanwhile, God is saying that right beside this bucket that continues to leak is a spring of living water. What is a spring? It is a source that has no end. It is something that continually flows. It is water that you do not have to manufacture or carry or protect. It is just given to you, and you can receive it.

Second is these idols, these things that we put at the center of our lives, also take more than you give them. The altars on the hills were built for sacrifice. That is what false gods do. They require you to bring something. They require you to bring them something to eat. They require you to consume, and a good thing placed before an altar like that will start out by taking your Saturdays, and then you will see it raise up in your temper, and then it will affect your marriage, and suddenly your kid’s joy is gone, and it keeps asking, until there is nothing left. Now nobody wakes up in the morning and thinks, “I am going to sacrifice my family today on the altar of success,” right? Like none of us are thinking that consciously, but your kids ask to play and you say, “Oh, I just, I got to finish this thing for work.” Your kids ask for a bedtime story, and you say, “Oh, I have one more thing I got to check in on before I do.” It is the Saturdays that begin to stack up, because you did not finish work in the five days you had, and so you missed their soccer game or baseball game or recital. It is just this one slow compromise after another where you say, “Maybe next week,” or “Maybe next time,” where you have given all of your patience away at work, so you come home, and you snap at your spouse. Where you have placed something at the center of your life and none of those things will ever say, “That is enough. You can rest now.” They will just say, “more, more, more,” and what happens is when they continually ask for more, and you pour more and more into that bucket, you eventually become like what you worship.

Psalms 115 describes that idea, the idol relationship that people have, and that we look at the things of this world that we want to fulfill us, and it says, “These things have mouths, but they cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see, they have ears, but they cannot hear,” and then it says this, “Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.” You start to take on the characteristics of whatever sits at the center of your life. If money becomes your God, if money becomes the center of your life, then sooner or later, every person eventually begins to look like a transaction. If approval is your God, you just start editing yourself for people who are in the room. If politics become your God or the center of your life, people stop being neighbors in need of love, and they become enemies who are supposed to be defeated, and worship creates things in your life where you cannot even see it. That is what it says: “They have mouths, but they cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see, ears, but they cannot hear,” and that we eventually become those things. They become those blind spots that we refuse to see in our life.

We become like what we worship, but that means the opposite can also be true, that if you spend your life looking at Jesus, worshiping Jesus, trusting Jesus, and following Jesus, then over time you will begin to look more like Him, more patient, more courageous, more generous, and more alive. That is why Jesus shows up to the dinner party with a sword in his mouth. It is because Jesus refuses to make peace with things that will eventually destroy us, and this sword, it is not one He holds in his hand. It is a sword that He holds in his mouth. It is an image of speaking the truth, of calling out truth to provide people with clarity about how the world is really working. It is more akin to like a surgeon’s scalpel. Kids, you can think about when you get a splinter in your finger, and your parent comes at you with the tweezers, and you start freaking out, because you don’t want it to hurt more, but they’re just coming to pull out something

that is actually harming you. That is why Jesus says, “repent,” in verse 16: “Repent therefore, otherwise I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Repent means to just turn around. It is a big Christian word that a lot of Christian street preachers use, but the whole thing with repentance is you realize you are going in the wrong direction, and you turn around. It is the moment where you make the wrong turn, and the GPS says, “recalculating.” Revelation 2:17 says this: “Whoever has ears,” remember idols have ears, but they cannot hear, so if you have ears, “Hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”

So, Jesus is saying, “Listen up. Can you hear what I am saying?” and then He makes two promises that contradict the promises of the idols. So, idols eat, they consume, they require you to bring sacrifice. What does Jesus say He will do? I will feed you bread from heaven, bread that satisfies, the bread of life, and it is hidden. You can’t just find it out on a street corner. It only comes from Jesus. It only comes from the presence of the Father, but He is not requiring you to bring something. He is giving you what it is you are looking for, and the second is a white stone with a new name on it. In that day, white stones could be used in a couple of ways. A white stone could be a vote of non-guilt, and so if there was a jury, and they placed a white stone, or a judge placed a white stone, it meant that you were **not** guilty. It could also be a ticket to a banquet, a meal where you could be received. If you handed in a white stone, it meant you were invited to the party. Either way, the message is the same. What Jesus is saying is that when you are shut down, when the world condemns you for not following after them, when the world says you are guilty of not following its ways, Jesus says you are **not** guilty, and He hands you a stone with a new name on it, not the name the world gives you, but the special name that only Jesus and you know, his special relationship with you. He is saying, “It might cost you to say no to the world, but I will offer you something better.”

So, let’s bring the illusion of temple thrones and skylines home to Littleton, because here is the reality, and I have said this a lot in this series. No one is going to ask you this week to sacrifice a cow to Zeus. That would be super weird if that happened, and if it actually does, like let me know, okay? That would be wild. No one is going to ask you to burn incense to Caesar or to a president. That is not how we operate. It is much more subversive than that. We still have thrones. Remember the list from the beginning? Our kids’ safety or their success, our money, our politics, our bodies being like, those are Pergamum’s thrones, but just with new names. Zeus promised power, and that is the same thing success will promise you. If you are successful enough, you will have more power. Caesar promised safety, and so does politics, or a family, or a community. Asclepius the god of health promised healing and restoration, and so does every single wellness app on your phone. They are all the same gods, they are all the same promises, they are all the same things that are trying to deliver, and here is the thing though. Most of us are never going to walk away from Jesus for one of those things. We are just going to say, “Hey Jesus, can you scoot over a little bit?” and so we will sing on a Sunday morning, “Jesus is Lord,” and then by Sunday afternoon, the team’s travel schedule is lord. What is lord in our life is often what gives us our first thought in the morning or the last thought at night. I don’t know about you, but for me, most days that is my phone. Some of us have these private spaces in our life where we say, “I still love Jesus, but He does not care about this situation. This thing is just my business.” We just ask Jesus to make a little bit of room. We place something else on the throne, something else in the center of our lives.

If you may be feeling the prompting of the Holy Spirit of like there might be some places in your life where you have placed something else or you have been trying to look to the world to fulfill something, I have a couple questions for you to ask yourself about what those areas might be. One is, “What makes you get up early in the morning? What gets you out of bed at the beginning of your day? What excites you about your day?” Second question, “If you were to examine your finances, what do you spend money on without even thinking about it?” Third question, “If you lost something, what would be the thing that would wreck you if you lost it? Maybe your family, your career?” and then finally, fourth question: “What makes you the angriest when it is threatened?” For me, sometimes it is the basketball court. I am growing. Whatever your answers are to those four questions, “What do you get up early for? What do you spend your money on without thinking? What would wreck you if you lost it?” and “what makes you angriest?” that will be the place that you can find something on the throne next to Jesus.

What we see in the next chapter of Revelation, chapter four, is that there was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. Pergamum had its thrones, Zeus on the hill, Caesar in his temple, but today there are different hilltops that have a calling for our allegiance. This is what John says in chapters four and five. There is someone who is sitting on the throne, and it is not a god like this world. It is a lamb who has been slain, standing at the center of the throne. Everything in this world is going to demand something from you. Jesus is the one who gave his life for you, and that is why He alone is worthy of your worship, so I want to give you three things for this week, three ways that you can maybe try to apply this. One is do the work of finding the space on your throne where you had asked Jesus to scoot over a little bit. Two, I want you to take that down, actually name that out loud, and three, I want you to give that over and to ask God to be the thing that satisfies you. Eat from the hidden manna of heaven.

As we close, I am going to invite you into a space where you can receive prayer during these last couple of songs. We are going to worship, because worship is one of the ways that we turn our hearts back to God, but I want some of you to reflect, because you have been splitting your worship for so long that you are exhausted. You have been looking for the things of this world to satisfy you. You have been looking for the things of this world to fill you up, and it is like pouring yourself out into a bucket with holes in the bottom, and you are exhausted. The invitation for you this morning is, if that is you, to come forward. We are going to have prayer ministers, and they are not even going to ask you why you are coming forward. They are just going to pray one prayer over you, one sentence, and then pray as the Spirit leads, but they are going to just pray this: “Jesus, you get the throne in this person’s life,” and so if you are a person who has made some room, has asked Jesus to scoot over, and you want Him to be front and center again, we just invite you this morning, come forward. We will have some prayer ministers on the sides over here, and you can just come forward and ask them to pray that simple prayer, and kids, you are welcome to come forward too. You can just bring your parents with you if you want. Let me pray for us.

Heavenly Father, God, as we respond now to you in worship, God, I pray that we would even see worship in a new light, that worship is not just songs that we sing or words that we say at a certain pitch or a certain key, but worship is actually bowing down before you, the living God, the God who is worthy of all of our praise, that God, you alone are worthy of our worship, because you alone are the living water that will satisfy. You alone sit on the throne. God, may you be the center of our lives. God, would your Spirit right now in this moment just gently prompt those of us who have asked you to scoot to the side.

For the places where we have said, “Yeah, Jesus, I love you, I worship you, I want to live for you, and could you just make a little bit more room?” God, I pray that we would have the courage to respond boldly today. All of us, including me, have areas in our life where we have asked you to step aside, to make a little room. May this be a moment when we come back to you, when we turn around, when we recalculate, and we say, “Oh, right, this was always about Jesus, and He is the one who is supposed to be at the center.” It is in Christ’s name that we pray, amen.

At Waterstone, we really believe that there are so many things in this world that we can put our faith or our trust in, and they will ultimately fail us, but when you put your faith in Jesus, when you give Him your trust, when you put Him at the center of your life, we believe that He will not let you down. It does not mean the road will always be easy. It does not mean that you won’t face hard days, but Jesus will be with you in every single one of those, because He is the one who gave Himself for you.

I am so excited about this afternoon. Fall Festival is going to be amazing. I am excited too. Yeah, we are ready to go. We have a little bit more time, so some of you are probably going to run, grab brunch, come back, or maybe you are helping set up. Thank you for all the work going into today, and we are just going to pray that it is a blessed afternoon, and we will enjoy that time together, but let me give you a benediction from chapter five, which we just talked a little bit about today. This is the proclamation, the worship that is given to Jesus, the bowing down that is given to Jesus because of who He is and what He has done, and you notice the shift or the change or the challenge to some of the other things that claim our allegiance or our hearts. It says this: “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, and they encircled the throne, and in a loud voice they were saying, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who is slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise,’ and then I heard every creature in heaven and on Earth and under the Earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to Him who sits on the throne, ‘And to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever, amen.’” May you go and live with that Jesus at the center of your life this week. Be blessed. We will see you this afternoon.

41:36 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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